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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 VATICAN 004361

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/WE (MENNUTI), AF/S, EB (CEKUTA),  
EB/TTP/ABT (C. JACKSON); ROME FOR HARDY-BASS, ROME PLEASE  
PASS FODAG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/06/2012

TAGS: PREL EAID EAGR EAID EAGR EAID EAGR VT VTPREL VTPREL  
SUBJECT: THE ZAMBIAN MAIZE CRISIS: MOVING THE HOLY SEE TO  
"YES" ON BIOTECH AGRICULTURE

REF: A. A) LUSAKA 1481  
B. B) LUSAKA 1468  
C. C) LUSAKA 1383  
D. D) STATE 163549

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E. E) STATE 163951  
F. F) USUN 2146  
G. G) FROWICK/MOZENA EMAILS 08/22/2002  
H. H) STATE 152979

CLASSIFIED BY: AMBASSADOR JIM NICHOLSON,  
REASON E.O. 12958 1.5 (B) (D).

11. (U) THIS IS AN ACTION REQUEST. SEE PARA 3.

12. (C) SUMMARY: SINCE THE START OF THE ZAMBIAN GMO FOOD AID CRISIS, EMBASSY VATICAN HAS PRESSED HARD AT VARIOUS LEVELS OF THE HOLY SEE FOR A STRONG STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF U.S. FOOD ASSISTANCE FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA AND BEYOND. BUILDING ON OVER A YEAR OF DIALOGUE ON THE SAFETY OF GMO'S, THE VATICAN IS FINALLY MOVING TOWARD ACCEPTANCE OF THE SAFETY OF GMO'S, BUT HAS PREFERRED TO FOCUS NARROWLY ON THE SITUATION IN ZAMBIA. OUR MUTUAL INTEREST IN FEEDING THE WORLD'S HUNGRY OFFERS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SECURE A MORE POSITIVE PUBLIC POSITION FROM THE HOLY SEE ON THE SAFETY OF BIOTECH FOOD FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION. WHILE SUCH A STATEMENT WOULD DOUBTLESS BE CAREFULLY WORDED AND NOT COMPLETELY ELIMINATE VATICAN CONCERNS AT ENVIRONMENTAL DANGERS FROM BIOTECH CROPS, IT COULD FACILITATE OUR BROADER EFFORT TO ERODE EUROPEAN AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL NON-SCIENTIFIC OBJECTIONS TO BIOTECH FOODS. END SUMMARY.

13. (C) ACTION REQUESTED: FOLLOWING UP ON THE SECRETARY'S STATEMENT ON GMO FOODS AT THE JOHANNESBURG SUMMIT, POST REQUESTS DEPARTMENT CONSIDER A LETTER FROM SECRETARY POWELL TO VATICAN FM TAURAN URGING THE HOLY SEE TO ISSUE A PUBLIC CONFIDENTIAL

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STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE SAFETY FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION OF US FOOD ASSISTANCE, SIMILAR TO EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND UN STATEMENTS IN REFS C AND F (PROPOSED TEXT AT PARA. 9 BELOW). LETTER SHOULD BE PREPARED FOR DELIVERY BY AMBASSADOR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, IDEALLY BEFORE AMBASSADOR RETURNS TO THE U.S. FOR CONSULTATIONS ON SEPTEMBER 13. SEE PARA 9 FOR SUGGESTED DRAFT LANGUAGE FOR THE LETTER. END ACTION REQUEST.

14. (SBU) FOLLOWING REPORTS THAT CATHOLIC PRIESTS IN ZAMBIA HAD SUPPORTED THE GOZ'S DECISION TO WITHHOLD U.S. PROVIDED FOOD AID (REF G), POLOFF MET AUGUST 22 WITH UNDERSECRETARY OF THE PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR REFUGEES AND MIGRANT PEOPLES FATHER MICHAEL BLUME, AND AUGUST 23 WITH JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE PROGRAM DIRECTOR FOR SOUTHERN AFRICA JENNY CAFISO TO URGE THEM TO MAKE CLEAR THEIR SUPPORT FOR THE SAFETY OF U.S. FOOD ASSISTANCE. BOTH TOOK ON BOARD OUR POINTS ON FOOD AID FROM REF H, AND REFERRED US TO THE JESUITS AT THE LUSAKA OFFICE OF THE JESUIT REFUGEE SERVICE. SUBSEQUENTLY, DCM AND POLOFF MET AUGUST 29 WITH VATICAN DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, MONSIGNOR CELESTINO MIGLIORE. MIGLIORE HAD NOT HEARD OF THE ZAMBIAN IMBROGLIO, BUT PROMISED TO LOOK INTO IT.

15. (C) AT A SEPTEMBER 5 FOLLOW-UP MEETING WITH VATICAN MFA SOUTHERN AFRICA DIRECTOR MONS. FRANCESCO CAVINA, POLOFF OFFERED COPIES OF THE EC AND UN STATEMENTS SUPPORTING US FOOD ASSISTANCE. NOTING THAT THE USC AND HOLY SEE SHARE A STRONG COMMON INTEREST IN HELPING TO FEED HUNGRY PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD, POLOFF URGED THE HOLY SEE TO ISSUE A STATEMENT SIMILAR TO THOSE OF THE EC, UN, AND WHO. CAVINA, WHO HAD BEEN BRIEFED BY MIGLIORE, SAID THE VATICAN HAD DECIDED TO TAKE ACTION TO CLARIFY THE CHURCH'S POSITION. THEIR PLAN OF CONFIDENTIAL

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ACTION, HOWEVER, CENTERED ON A STATEMENT BY THE ZAMBIAN BISHOPS' COUNCIL EMPHASIZING THE NEED TO FEED THE HUNGRY NOW, WITH THE FOOD ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE ALREADY IN ZAMBIA, WHILE SETTING ASIDE FOR LATER ARGUMENTS ABOUT AGRICULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY. CAVINA ALSO SAID THE PAPAL NUNCIO IN LUSAKA HAD CONVOKED THE JESUIT DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION (REF G) AND WOULD REMIND HIM OF THE NEED NOT TO CONTRADICT BASIC HOLY SEE POSITIONS ON SOLIDARITY (I.E. ON THE MORAL IMPERATIVE OF USING AVAILABLE FOOD TO FEED HUNGRY PEOPLE).

16. (C) WHILE WELCOMING THIS PROGRESS, POLOFF URGED CAVINA TO WORK UP A BROADER MESSAGE ON THE SAFETY OF BIOTECH FOOD, DELIVERED FROM THE HOLY SEE ITSELF. UNDERSCORING THE REF H POINT THAT THE USG PROVIDES 63 PERCENT OF THE WFP'S GLOBAL

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ACTION EUR-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AF-00	AGRE-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00
	COME-00	USNW-00	DODE-00	WHA-00	PERC-00	SRPP-00	DS-00
	EB-00	FDRE-01	VC-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00
	LAB-01	L-00	VCE-00	AC-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-02
	OMB-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00
	SP-00	SSO-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	EPAE-00	PMB-00
	DSCC-00	PRM-00	DRL-02	G-00	NFAT-00	SAS-00	/009W

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FM AMEMBASSY VATICAN  
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INFO AMEMBASSY HARARE PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY LILONGWE PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY LUANDA PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY  
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FOOD ASSISTANCE AND THE DANGEROUS PRECEDENT THAT WOULD BE SET BY THE ZAMBIAN REJECTION OF U.S. MAIZE, POLOFF INSISTED THAT THE ISSUE WAS FAR BROADER, WITH POTENTIALLY DISASTROUS CONSEQUENCES FOR HUNGRY PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD. CAVINA WAS

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NON-COMMITAL, NOTING THAT THE HOLY SEE HAD A DELICATE RELATIONSHIP WITH PRESIDENT MWANAWASA, A SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST. CAVINA RELATED THAT THE ZAMBIAN GOVERNMENT HAD JUST LAST JULY COLLUDED IN A "BAIT AND SWITCH" SETUP OF THE PAPAL NUNCIO OVER THE ARCHBISHOP MALINGO ISSUE. (NOTE: MALINGO IS THE POPULIST FAITH HEALING ZAMBIAN ARCHBISHOP WHO ALMOST GOT HIMSELF EXCOMMUNICATED LAST YEAR AFTER "MARRYING" KOREAN DIVORCEE MARIA SUNG IN A MASS UNIFICATION CHURCH CEREMONY IN NEW YORK. SUNG, NOW HIS EX-"WIFE," CURRENTLY RESIDES IN LUSAKA AND, ACCORDING TO CAVINA, AMBUSHED THE NUNCIO IN FRONT OF TV CAMERAS INSIDE THE ZAMBIAN MFA. END NOTE.)

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COMMENT:  
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17. (C) FOR THE PAST EIGHTEEN MONTHS POST HAS WORKED TO GET TO HOLY SEE TO BUILD ON ITS CAUTIOUSLY OPTIMISTIC PUBLIC STANCE TOWARDS BIOTECHNOLOGY. IN OUR VIEW, A STRONG PUBLIC STANCE IN SUPPORT OF AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY IS A NATURAL FOR ANYONE INTERESTED IN PROMOTING FOOD SECURITY IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD. THE ZAMBIAN FOOD CRISIS, AS TRAGIC AS IT IS, MAY PRESENT A "DEFINING MOMENT" FOR OUR BIOTECH DIALOGUE WITH THE HOLY SEE. NOBODY, AND ESPECIALLY NOT THE POPE, CAN ARGUE THAT A PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE SHOULD APPLY WHEN IT MEANS REAL HUMAN BEINGS WILL GO HUNGRY OR EVEN STARVE. WITH U.S. FOOD AID SO VITAL TO ADDRESSING THE SOUTHERN AFRICAN FOOD CRISIS, THE HOLY SEE SHOULD BE SINGING FROM THE SAME SHEET WITH US. WE ARE, IN FACT, COORDINATING POSITIONS AT THE UN ON A CONVENTION TO BAN ALL FORMS OF HUMAN CLONING -- THE "FLIP

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SIDE" OF THE GMO FOOD DEBATE. POST BELIEVES THAT THE TIME IS RIGHT FOR A HIGH-LEVEL APPROACH, WHICH COULD NUDGE THE HOLY SEE OFF THE FENCE, AT LEAST AS REGARDS THE SAFETY FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION OF BIOTECH FOODS. WHILE ANY HOLY SEE STATEMENT

WOULD DOUBTLESS BE CAREFULLY WORDED AND NOT ERASE VATICAN CONCERNS AT ENVIRONMENTAL DANGERS FROM BIOTECH CROPS, IT COULD GREATLY FACILITATE OUR BROADER EFFORT TO ERODE EUROPEAN AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL OBJECTIONS TO AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS OF BIOTECH FOODS. (NOTE: WE WILL NEED TO ADDRESS THE HOLY SEE'S CONCERNS AT POSSIBLE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF GMO CROPS IN THE FUTURE, AND POST HAS AN ACTION PLAN FOR THAT TO BE REPORTED SEPTEL. END NOTE.)

**18.** (SBU) POST REQUESTS THAT SECRETARY POWELL CONSIDER SENDING VATICAN FM ARCHBISHOP JEAN LOUIS TAURAN A LETTER URGING THE HOLY SEE TO ISSUE A STATEMENT THAT TRACKS WITH THE EXISTING UN AND EC STATEMENTS ON BIOTECH FOOD SAFETY. POST OFFERS BELOW SUGGESTED LANGUAGE FOR A POWELL/TAURAN LETTER, SUBSTANTIALLY DRAWN FROM THE LARSON/DIOUF LETTER TRANSMITTED IN REF E.

**19.** (SBU) PROPOSED LANGUAGE FOR LETTER TO VATICAN FM TAURAN, BEGIN TEXT:

YOUR EXCELLENCY,

THE UNITED STATES IS DEEPLY CONCERNED AT THE UNFOLDING HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. I KNOW THAT HOLY SEE, WHERE THE CENTRALITY OF THE HUMAN PERSON IS OF PARAMOUNT CONCERN, SHARES OUR CONCERN ABOUT THE MILLIONS OF AFRICAN LIVES NOW AT RISK FROM HUNGER AND STARVATION.

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THE UNITED STATES IS CURRENTLY SEEKING TO HELP PROVIDE SAFE FOOD TO ALL THOSE IN NEED -- IN SOUTHERN AFRICA AND ELSEWHERE WHERE NEEDS ARE GREAT. THE UNITED STATES PROVIDES SIXTY-THREE PERCENT OF THE FOOD ASSISTANCE GIVEN TO THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAM, AND ALREADY THE UNITED STATES HAS PROVIDED OVER SEVENTY PERCENT OF THE FOOD ASSISTANCE ON THE GROUND IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. THERE IS NO ALTERNATIVE SUPPLY TO REPLACE THE RISING NEED FOR FOOD TO AVOID MASS STARVATION IN THIS REGION. UNFORTUNATELY, SOME INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING SOME ELEMENTS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, HAVE ARGUED AGAINST DISTRIBUTING U.S. FOOD ASSISTANCE BECAUSE IT CANNOT BE GUARANTEED TO BE FREE OF "TRANSGENIC" SEEDS.

THE UNITED STATES IS DEEPLY CONCERNED THAT CONFUSION ABOUT

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ACTION EUR-00

INFO	LOG-00	NP-00	AF-00	AGRE-00	AID-00	ACQ-00	CIAE-00
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	OMB-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00
	SP-00	SSO-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	EPAE-00	PMB-00
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THE SAFETY OF THESE FOOD PRODUCTS  
-- THE SAME FOOD AS IS CONSUMED BY MILLIONS OF AMERICANS  
EVERY DAY -- WILL LEAD TO FURTHER HUNGER AND STARVATION. WE  
KNOW THAT COUNTRIES WISH TO MAKE INFORMED CHOICES ABOUT FOOD  
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SAFETY FOR THE GOOD OF THEIR PEOPLE. THE SCIENCE ON THESE  
FOOD PRODUCTS IS CLEAR: BIOTECH FOODS AVAILABLE TODAY ARE AS

SAFE TO CONSUME AS ARE THEIR CONVENTIONAL COUNTERPARTS.

THE UNITED NATIONS, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, AND THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AMONG OTHER ORGANIZATIONS HAVE RECENTLY ISSUED STATEMENTS SUPPORTING THIS VIEW. THE UNITED STATES BELIEVES THAT A CLEAR AND UNAMBIGUOUS STATEMENT FROM THE HOLY SEE, A MORAL LEADER WHOSE VOICE IS RESPECTED THE WORLD OVER, REGARDING THE SAFETY OF GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS WOULD GREATLY HELP TO OVERCOME PREVAILING HESITATIONS IN AFRICA AND BEYOND. IN THIS WAY, THE HOLY SEE COULD MAKE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO ALLEVIATING THE SUFFERING OF HUNGRY PEOPLE NOT JUST IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, BUT EVERYWHERE PEOPLE RECEIVE FOOD ASSISTANCE.

IF WE CAN WORK TOGETHER TO OVERCOME THIS GRAVE CRISIS OF HUMAN SUFFERING IN SOUTHERN AFRICA, WE CAN THEN TURN OUR ATTENTION TO REVITALIZING AFRICAN AGRICULTURE AND PRODUCTIVITY TO PREVENT FUTURE CRISES. I LOOK FORWARD TO A POSITIVE COLLABORATION ON THIS VITAL MATTER.

SINCERELY,  
COLIN POWELL  
SECRETARY OF STATE

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END TEXT.

NICHOLSON

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